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SUBJECT: DRAFT BANGLADESH PART I FOR 2007-2008 INTERNATIONAL
NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT (INCSR)

11. (U) The following is the draft text on Bangladesh of the first part (drugs and chemical control) for the 2007-2008 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report:

12. (U) I. Summary: A Major narcotics bust in Dhaka in October 2007 supported law enforcement officials' claims of a sharp increase in methamphetamine abuse in Bangladesh, particularly among upper-class urban youths. The bust included the first seizure of drugs-making equipment suggesting substantial domestic production, some of which might be available to shipment to other countries. A November 2007 seizure of 23.5 kilograms of heroin at Dhaka's international airport confirmed that at least some heroin continues to be transshipped through Bangladesh. There is no evidence that Bangladesh is a significant cultivator or producer of narcotics. The Bangladesh government (GOB) officials charged with controlling and preventing illegal substance trafficking lack training, equipment, continuity of leadership, and other resources to detect and interdict the flow of drugs. An ongoing lack of cooperation among law enforcement agencies has made narcotics control difficult, although the Ministry of Home Affairs led an effort in late 2007 to improve coordination. While corruption at all levels of government traditionally has hampered the country's drug interdiction efforts, the Caretaker Government that came to power in January 2007 has made fighting graft a top priority. Law-enforcement officials say the anti-graft push has made efforts to go after politically connected drug dealers easier. Bangladesh is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

13. (U) II. Status of Country: The country's porous borders make the illegal flow of narcotics from neighboring countries easy and make Bangladesh an attractive transfer point for drugs transiting the region. The number of drug users in Bangladesh has been estimated at between 100,000 and 1.7 million, with 20,000-25,000 injecting drug users and 45,000 heroin smokers. Other drugs used in Bangladesh are methamphetamines, marijuana, and a codeine-based cough syrup. After years of unwillingness to recognize narcotics issues, the country's law enforcement bodies took a stance against drugs in 2006, largely due to two factors: high-profile cases of heroin smuggling to the United Kingdom in 2005 and growing methamphetamine (locally, yaba) use among the young elite. Yaba was initially popular among college students who used it to stay awake all night to study for exams, but has since become a popular stimulant at parties and is known as the "sex drug." A large proportion of street urchins in Dhaka also sniff glue as an appetite suppressant as well as for its drug effects, according to the head of a leading drug rehabilitation organization.

14. (U) III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2006: Policy Initiatives. Continuing ineffective government coordination to counter narcotics abuse led to the creation of a new interagency monitoring group in November 2007. The new group is led by top officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC). Additionally, all narcotics cases fall

under the speedy trial act, under which a decision must be reached within three months.

5 (U) Law Enforcement Efforts. Law enforcement units engaged in operations to counter narcotics include the police, the DNC, the border defense forces known as the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), customs, the navy, the coast guard, local magistrates and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), an elite group that plays a leading role in fighting terrorism, corruption and narcotics abuse. Customs, the navy, the coast guard and the DNC all suffer from poor funding, inadequate equipment, understaffing and lack of training. For example, the DNC budget for 2007-2008 of nearly 150 million taka (slightly more than \$2 million) is marginally less than the budget for the previous year. Its work force of about 935 people also is nearly 350 positions short of the number of employees approved by the government. There is no DNC presence at the international airports in Chittagong and Sylhet and only two at Dhaka airport, and DNC officers throughout the country are not authorized to carry weapons. Land crossings are particularly porous, particularly the border with Burma over which much yaba and other drugs flow. One law-enforcement official noted that some border checkpoints historically have not had female constables who could perform body searches on women crossing into Bangladesh. Although RAB has become perhaps the highest-profile anti-narcotics force in the country, it has neither a special counter-narcotics section nor specific counter-narcotics training. Its drug-fighting resources appear stronger than other law-enforcement agencies, however, with a recently purchased chemical analyzer that can be used to identify drugs and an internally trained 44-dog canine corps.

16. (U) Law Enforcement Efforts continued: Bangladesh's counter-narcotics operations received a huge boost in late October when the RAB made one of the largest drug busts in the country's history. In a raid on a Dhaka office the RAB seized about 130,000 yaba tablets, with a street value of more than \$1 million, and large

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amounts of drugs-making equipment and raw materials. RAB officers arrested a man suspected of being a leading drugs baron. One immediate result of the raid was to send the street price of yaba from 200-300 taka a tablet to 700 taka (\$10) or more.

17. (U) The DNC keeps tabs primarily on seizures by its own officers. Drugs seized by the department from January through September 2006 are as follows: 18 kg of heroin (compared to 16.3 kilograms in all of 2006 and 20.2 kilograms in 2005); 1,373 kilograms of marijuana (compared to 1,345 kilograms in 2006 and 1,589 kilograms in 2005); more than 20,000 bottles of phensidyl, a codeine-based, highly addictive cough syrup produced in India; 215 ampoules of pethedine, an injectable opiate with medical application as an anesthetic; and 5,652 tablets of yaba. The RAB reported seizing nearly 133,000 tablets of yaba in 2007 through October, almost all of which came from the one Dhaka raid, compared to about 5,000 tablets in all of 2006 and less than 1,000 tablets in 2005. Heroin seizures by RAB through October 2007 were 19.8 kilograms, compared to 38.5 kilograms in all of 2006 and 341 kilograms in 2005. More than 80,000 bottles of phensidyl were seized through October, compared to nearly 190,000 bottles in all of 2006 and about 120,000 bottles in 2005.

18. (U) Corruption: The Caretaker Government that came to power in January 2007 made fighting the country's endemic corruption that permeated all levels of politics and society a top priority. The chairman and members of the largely ineffective Anti-Corruption Commission were replaced with a new team led by a retired army chief that has charged many of Bangladesh's leading politicians, businessmen and civil servants with graft. The Government also formed a National Coordination Committee to help with the graft investigations. Several task forces were set up to help the committee with its work in Dhaka and outlying districts. Between 100 and 200 high-profile graft suspects were in jail as of October 12, 2007. RAB officials say the new environment has made it much more conducive to target suspected drug barons. The GOB does not, as a matter of government policy, encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of drugs or controlled substances or launder proceeds from their transactions. No senior official has been identified as engaging in, encouraging, or facilitating the

production or distribution of drugs or controlled substances.

¶9. (U) Agreements and Treaties: Bangladesh is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 UN Single Convention, and the 1972 Protocol amending the Single Convention. The GOB and USG signed a Letter of Agreement on Law Enforcement and Narcotics Control (LOA) in September 2002 under which the U.S. would provide equipment and technical assistance to the DNC and its central chemical laboratory.

The LOA also provided for training, via the U.S. Department of Justice, to law enforcement personnel involved in counter-narcotics activities. There is no US-Bangladesh extradition treaty; however, Bangladesh law permits extradition without the existence of a treaty. There has been limited cooperation with the return of fugitives from Bangladesh.

¶10. (U) Cultivation/Production. The DNC reported it eradicated about 60,000 poppy plants and about 20 kilograms of poppy seeds in a single operation in early 2007. The DNC acknowledged that a limited amount of cannabis is cultivated in the hill tracts near Chittagong, in the southern silt islands, and in the northeastern region, claiming it is for local consumption. The DNC also reported that as soon as knowledge of a cannabis crop reaches its officers, that crop is destroyed in concert with law enforcement agencies.

¶11. (U) Drug Flow/Transit. Customs officials seized 23.5 kilograms of low-quality heroin at Dhaka's international airport on November 12, 2007. Media reported that two Bangladeshis bound for China and suspected of belonging to an international drug smuggling syndicate were arrested after the heroin was found in their luggage. A month earlier, the RAB reported the seizure of three kilograms of heroin from the Sylhet village home of a Bangladeshi UK resident who was in country on vacation. The heroin, according to RAB, came through India to Bangladesh from an unknown location. Two years earlier, two smuggling cases of about 75 kilograms of heroin to the UK and the resulting investigations by the GOB identified weaknesses in the country's narcotics-detection infrastructure. Bangladesh is situated between the Golden Crescent to the west and the Golden Triangle to the east, placing the country at continued risk for transit crimes. Opium-based pharmaceuticals and other medicinal drugs are being smuggled into Bangladesh from India. White (injectable) heroin comes in from Burma.

¶12. (U) Domestic Programs (Demand Reduction). Law-enforcement officials believe that drug abuse, while previously a problem among the ultra-poor, is becoming a major problem among the wealthy and well-educated young. Recent cases of yaba addiction in wealthy neighborhoods and on university campuses are of particular concern to the government. The GOB runs several domestic programs, but is

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not funding them at levels to ensure their success. The DNC sponsors rudimentary educational programs aimed at youth in schools and mosques, but there is little funding for these programs and no clear indication of their impact. In addition, the DNC currently runs outpatient and detoxification centers in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, and Rajshahi. These centers only remove the drug from the addict's system; they do not address the underlying causes of individual addiction. Hence, they are not successful in assisting addicts to overcome their addiction over the long term. There are other, non-governmental centers with a variety of treatment therapies available. Unfortunately, most of these are quite expensive by Bangladeshi standards and therefore beyond the reach of most drug addicts. One drug addicts' rehabilitation organization, APON, operates five long-term residential rehabilitation centers, including the first center in Bangladesh for the rehabilitation of female addicts (opened in 2005). APON says it is the only organization that includes street children in its drug rehabilitation program.

¶13. (U) IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs. Policy Initiatives: The USG continues to support Bangladesh's counter-narcotics efforts through various commodities and training assistance programs. With State Department narcotics assistance funds, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration held a "Basic Drug Enforcement" training academy in Bangladesh in June 2007. Thirty-one counter-narcotics officers - including participants from

the Bangladesh Rifles border security force, the police, customs and DNC - participated in training that covered topics from operational planning and undercover operations to proper evidence handling and report writing. The instruction included drug identification using test kits supplied by the DEA, and hands-on training in proper handcuffing techniques. The U.S. Agency for International Development provides about \$3 million annually to Family Health International to implement the Bangladesh AIDS Program, which includes working with intravenous drug users. DOJ efforts to improve the anti-money laundering and financial intelligence capabilities of the Bangladesh Bank support counter-narcotics activities in the country.

¶14. (U) The Road Ahead. The USG will continue to provide law enforcement and forensic training for GOB officials, much of which will be useful to Bangladesh's counter-narcotics efforts. Mission has about \$52,000 available from previous years in narcotics assistance funds that it plans to provide to APON to improve its facilities for rehabilitation of female drug addicts. In late 2007, Mission also began distributing to local narcotics enforcement agencies hundreds of kits to test for marijuana, methamphetamines and opiates. Post received no new International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement funding for fiscal years 2007 and 2008.